Dynamic and Representative Government

Improve regional coordination and partnerships for infrastructure and services
Action Area: Dynamic and Representative Government

Recommendation:
Improve regional coordination and partnerships for infrastructure and services.

Strategy 1
Give regional and local officials and residents more say in shaping services and infrastructure.

Action 1.1: Enable local voices on the boards of all regional organizations. A majority of the members of the governing and decision-making boards of all regional entities, such as the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) and Massachusetts Port Authority (MassPort), should be selected by local officials and residents of the region in which they serve. All regional entities should create new and meaningful opportunities to enable service users to contribute to decision making and collaborate in developing plans and policies.

Strategy 2
Create new regional entities with the authority to shape services.

Action 2.1: Create a Greater Boston Infrastructure Coordination Committee that brings together representatives from all regional infrastructure and planning agencies to coordinate regional investment (generated in part by regional revenue sources) and capital plans and to oversee major project implementation. The Board should oversee investment in regional transportation, water, climate resilience/adaptation, parks and recreation, and natural resource infrastructure.

Action 2.2: Create a Greater Boston Regional Parks and Recreation Agency that would govern all DCR parks and facilities in the region. This agency would have the ability to generate regional revenues to support that infrastructure and offer robust recreational services. The agency should be governed by a board appointed by local elected and appointed municipal leaders and include relevant state agency officials.

Action 2.3: Give the region a say in major housing developments by creating a Greater Boston Regional Housing Board, which would be able to examine and potentially seek reconsideration or appeal local decisions where they are considered detrimental to efforts to meet regional housing needs as documented in local and regional plans. The Board would also benefit from and be able to invest regional resources in housing production. The Regional Housing Board’s housing studies and data would be required to be considered in local decisions relating to housing needs and would be admissible in any dispute over a zoning case or appeal.
Strategy 3
Reshape service provision in key sectors such as health and education.

- **Action 3.1:** Elevate local and regional input in the health and education sectors. Develop regular regional plans for health and education to guide health and education sector growth. Form new regional health and education planning organizations or fold this work into existing regional planning agencies. They should be governed by leaders in those sectors, but equally by representatives from regional bodies and local municipal leaders and health officials.

- **Action 3.2:** Strengthen the community obligation of hospitals. Health care entities should be governed by a statutory “community commitment” to the residents of the cities and towns they serve, not only the patients they treat. All health care entities should have community-appointed governing board members. Health care entities should partner with local public health agencies in their catchment areas and jointly conduct community health assessments and implement health improvement plans for their cities and towns.

- **Action 3.3:** Ensure that institutions of higher learning invest in and support the region. Institutions of higher learning should be governed by a statutory “community commitment” that should set out a certain level of required community investment and identify plans to meet the educational goals of the region. They should be mandated to have representatives of regional bodies and local government on their boards, serving as trustees.